



News Release

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

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TEAM CHARLESTON KEEPS C-17S FLYING FROM FRANKFURT

RHEIN-MAIN AB, GERMANY -- Team Charleston members are keeping the mission going while deployed to Rhein-Main AB, Germany, in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The 17th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron, aligned under the 437th Aerospace Expeditionary Group, is there to better support aircrews potentially heading into a combat environment, according to Col. Rich Richardson, 437 AEG commander.

"Aircrews have to have a lot more information flow," Richardson said. "If we didn't take care of a lot of the little things for them, the mission wouldn't work."

To take care of those requirements, a number of Team Charleston personnel are working long hours away from their families on an unfamiliar, busy flightline.

"There's a lot more flightline traffic here than at home," said Master Sgt. Kris Huntley, a jet engine technician with the 315th Aircraft Generation Squadron. "There's a lot of work. We're working 12-hour days."

Another big change for deployed Team Charleston members is the living conditions at Rhein-Main.

"We're living in the contingency dorms," Huntley said. "There are anywhere from two-four people per room. Also, the base isn't geared toward the flightline, so the dining facility has odd hours. We do a lot of cooking for ourselves."

In his first deployment as a reservist, Huntley has missed out on some big events at home, just like many other military members.

"I missed my daughter's college graduation," Huntley said. "I also missed my 5-year-old's birthday."

Staff Sgt. Edward Lawler, a fuels systems technician deployed from the 437th Maintenance Squadron, said the different environment is great for training.

"I ran into some fuel problems, and since there's no one else here, I had to figure it out for myself," Lawler said. "I'm really learning the jet."

Lawler said as a back-shop worker, he's learned a lot by watching and working with the maintainers on the flightline.

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"I didn't know how hard they worked or what they were doing," Lawler said. "It's good experience to see them working."

Another big plus, according to Lawler, is the interaction between specialists and other maintainers.

"We're working more as a team here," he said. "You get to know how other areas operate."

Other flightline personnel noticed the difference also.

"I've learned a lot more about the aircraft," said Staff Sgt. Johnny Brinson, 315 AGS electrical and environmental technician. "You get to be a 'jack of all trades.'" Brinson also noted how well Team Charleston members are treated and what a great atmosphere there is at Rhein-Main.

As one of a very few hydraulics technicians, Airman 1st Class Steven Davenport, 437th Aircraft Generation Squadron, noticed he has a lot more responsibility for himself than he does at the home station.

"The pace is a little faster, and you get to do some work outside of your usual job," Davenport said. "It seems to be going really smooth. You get to know the jet a lot better, and you get to see the big picture."

(For more information or interviews with airmen, contact Capt. Krista Carlos at 963-5589 or Capt. Linda Pepin at 963-5537)